My name is Tapenova Gulden. I am a 4th year student of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Kazakh National University named after al-Farabi. In September 2019, I came to study in Japan. I’ve studied at Waseda University for about a year on the academic mobility program.

I can say that the 2019-2020 academic year was very good despite the coronavirus. Because during this time, I met many different people, learned a lot and traveled a lot in Japan.

My Japanese language skills have improved. Because the language you use every day, the books you read, the letters you write, the conversations you listen to, everything becomes Japanese. Of course, at first, it was a little difficult to think in Japanese, to find the right words or the proper grammar. But then I began to understand the nuances of the words I used, automatically picked up grammatical constructions and correct synonyms. Chatting with my Japanese friends improved my speaking Japanese.

I believe that studying abroad is not only learning a foreign language but also learning a new culture, new people, a new world. When you come to such a big city like Tokyo, we find ourselves in an international company. Only Japanese students studied on my campus. But since I could study on other campuses, I had the opportunity to communicate with Koreans, Chinese, Italians, Indians, Americans, etc.

The lessons were mostly in Japanese, but I also took lessons in English.

For example, at the university, it was possible to take the subject ‘Intercultural study’. And in February I went to the capital of Thailand for a week with other students who also took this subject. It is an international exchange program designed to maintain a good relationship with the University of Thailand and gain international experience.

In my free time, I traveled around Japan, tasted delicious Japanese food, and participated in different festivals. Besides Tokyo, I visited Osaka, Kyoto, Nara, Kobe in the west, Nikko, Chichibu, Atami in the east, and other places. Tokyo itself is a borderless metropolis, so there is a lot to visit.

Here I got the experience of independent living.

Now I'll tell you about what I was impressed by.

First, Japanese culture. Of course, we learned about Japanese culture at university and heard various real-life examples from teachers. But it’s different when you go through it yourself . The Japanese are really very polite. The Japanese do not show discontent, always answer politely, do not raise their voices. Their politeness is very noticeable, especially service in cafes and restaurants. I can say that high quality’s service is in Japan.

Secondly, public transport. Public transport in Japan is very clean. Japanese public transportation is characterized by its punctuality, its superb service. The delays are only due to weather conditions. Even there, only for a few minutes. And the passengers stand in line at the platform. They keep the line and no one jumps the line. Also, no one speaks on a mobile phone on the road (they put it on silent mode). Therefore, the inside of the transport is always quiet.

Third, cleanliness. The streets are very clean. No garbage. Here garbage is sorted into combustible and non-combustible waste; plastic bottles; paper (newspapers, magazines, advertising), etc. In this regard, special garbage cans have been allocated. But they are only available in limited areas, for example, at a station or near a store. There are no garbage cans on the streets.

Japan is a country that has something to idolize and has something to criticize for, but it is definitely a country that you need to visit at least once. And the Japanese language and culture are well worth spending many hours studying.

By learning foreign culture, we begin to know our culture better . We not only broaden our horizons and gain new experience, but also begin to value our cultural heritage. I think that in this way we can bring something that will benefit our country.